

## 1Kings 8:22-30, 41-43 – King Solomon’s prayer

### 1. What is prayer?

What is prayer? What do we mean when we say that we are praying?

At one end of the spectrum, prayer is more about the pray-er than about the God being prayed to:  
Soren Kierkegaard, the philosopher, once said,

“Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.”

At the other end of the spectrum, John Wesley said,

“God does nothing except in response to believing prayer.”

So what is prayer? And what do we mean when we say we are praying?

In our Old Testament reading, we reach the climax of the story of Samuel, and the story of Kings.

King Solomon in all his majesty has built the temple, the house of God.

King Solomon dedicates the temple to God,

But what he does, what he says, more what he prays – reveals what he thinks about God.

That is, at the pinnacle of Solomon’s reign, at the glorious unveiling of the temple,

Solomon gives us a window into his relationship with God.

Solomon gives us a window into the expression of his relationship with God, in his prayer.

And Solomon’s prayer gives us a model for our relationship with God,

and particularly Solomon’s prayer gives us a model for the who’s, the what’s, the where’s of prayer.

## 2. To whom do we pray? (vv. 22-24)

So, the first question – to whom do we pray?

This question is completely obvious on one level, but on another is deeply profound.

For the nature of the god to whom you pray, shapes the way and the nature of your prayer.

<< Illus'n – taking a tour of the Turkish mosque in Auburn – Allah is holy, I am unworthy >>

So who is the God to whom Solomon prays? << ask for responses from the reading sheet >>

- 1) He is Yahweh, the personal God of Israel.
- 2) There is no other God like him – in fact the word order – “there is none like you”  
– neither in heaven, nor on earth – nor above/below – merismus – the complete universe.
- 3) And what particular characteristics does Solomon draw our attention to about God, Yahweh?  
- I) Covenant keeping & II) Steadfast love (faithfulness - hesed)

This is a majestic description of God.

This majestic description shakes us out of our complacency and arrogance when we presume upon prayer.

As my mind can wander off during our time of prayer

– here is a sober reminder of the God to whom we pray.

But coming back to Solomon.

Solomon is not theorizing about the nature of God, like a philosopher postulating about the unknown.

No. Solomon knows that God is a covenant keeping God.

Solomon knows that God is a steadfast love kind of God because

Yahweh has kept his promise to David.

Yahweh spoke to David and told him what he was going to do, and Yahweh did it. << 2Samuel 7 >>

In fact, Solomon makes the connection between the metaphorical mouth of God,

And the metaphorical hand of God.

That is, God spoke with his proverbial mouth to David,

And know God acted with his proverbial hand to Solomon, as the temple was built.

<< Illus'n – one of the joys of parenting is when the child recalls – “but you promised”

- Sometimes they're exactly right, and I need to act.
- Sometimes there's factors beyond your control, and therefore plans change >>

How different is God – when God promises, God delivers, God acts.

### 3. What shall we pray? (vv. 25-26)

But then, if we grasp the reality of the God to whom we pray, then what shall we pray?

<< Illus'n – the youth group prayer – “Yeah, Lord, yeah, we just yeah ... >>

Well, what does Solomon pray? << ask for responses>>

Two words – Keep & confirm. Keep your promise, and confirm your word.

Specifically, keep your promise concerning the line of David – that it shall never fail the throne of Israel.

And confirm – confirm the word you promised – through seeing it come into reality.

In fact Solomon literally says – “Amen please, the word which you have spoken”

“Amen” meaning – “may it be so”, “may it be confirmed”, “may it be proven”.

<< Aside- the use of ‘amen’ today – giving our consent to the prayer.

<< Aside – the promise made at weddings – will you ... support them ... >>

Solomon is asking God to confirm, to amen his promise,

Specifically in regards to the line of David remaining on the throne of Israel.

But did you notice the two sided nature of the promise that God made to king David?

Did you notice what is required of the line of David to remain on the throne?

“If only your children look to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.” <v. 25 >

The children of David must walk before Yahweh.

That is, the children of David must live according to the ways of God, they must follow the law.

And here is the secret to unlocking the book of Kings.

Here is the big give away as to what will happen in the rest of this book.

The fundamental relationship for each king of Israel is not their relationship to the people.

The fundamental relationship for each king of Israel is their attitude towards God.

45 times through the book of Kings the statement is made:

“He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” or “He did what was right in the sight of the Lord”

This kingship is no ordinary monarchy. This kingship is the theo-centric monarchy.

Each king is accountable to God for his actions.

Coming back to the content of Solomon’s prayer, though,

Solomon’s prayer fall into this category, of seeking to walk in the ways of God.

For Solomon is asking God to act upon his promise, to ‘amen’ his word.

Here is Israel’s king that is seeking after the heart of God.

#### 4. Where shall we pray? (vv. 27-30)

This leads to another pertinent question – where shall we pray?

What is the location in which we should orientate ourselves to God, and more importantly, What does the location reveal about the God to whom we pray?

Solomon rightly understands the relationship between God and the location of the pray-er.

Solomon asks the question – “But will God indeed dwell on the earth?”

For Solomon knows the reality of God – “Even the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house”

But before we think – well, why did you build it then?

There is logic to Solomon’s thinking.

- 1) God said that he would put his name “there”. That is, this house is set aside for God’s name.
- 2) When the prayer is offered toward this ‘house’, then
- 3) Solomon asks God to hear in heaven, in his dwelling place.

So even though the temple is the place where mediation occurred between Israel and God.

Even though the temple contained the most holy place, where the most holy items, like the ark of the covenant were kept.

The temple was not where God himself dwelt. The temple was not the residence of Yahweh.

<< Appl’n – humanity keeps trying to create their own gods in temples, or confine God to their temples >>

The answer to the question – where shall we pray?

The real answer for Solomon was - yes towards the house that he had built,

But given the huge caveat – that he was asking God to hear from his residence in heaven.

## 5. Who else shall pray? (vv. 41-43)

Finally, who else shall pray?

That is, Solomon knew that all the people of Israel would come to the temple.

Solomon knew that all the tribes of Israel would pray to God at the temple.

And yet, there is also a provision for the outsider, the non-Jew, the people unrelated to Abraham.

v. 41 – ‘the foreigner’ who specifically is “Not from your people, Israel”  
who specifically has ‘come from a distant land’

The reason being – “because of Your name” “because of your great name”  
“because of your mighty hand and outstretched arm”

When that total outsider, that total foreigner comes to the temple to pray,  
Solomon asks God – “May you hear in heaven”

<< Illus’n – could you imagine if I walked into the great synagogue – read this out – the reaction ... >>

And yet here is the outsider, included into the inner sanctum of prayer.

## 6. Praying today

Solomon's prayer, in the dedication for the temple sets out a blueprint for our prayers.

That is, Solomon's prayer sets out a structure for us

that is then magnified through the brilliant light of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I'll explain what I mean by answering the questions I've asked, in light of our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, to whom do we pray today?

Yes, it is the same God as Solomon, the God of Israel, the covenant keeping, & steadfast God

But now we know that God has kept all his promises through our Lord Jesus Christ,

More, we know God as our Father in heaven, revealed to his by God the Son,

And we know God on the most intimate level, because his spirit is poured out upon us.

<< Illus'n – coming home from the work trip – seeing Rachel – the joy >>

We know God on the most deep intimate level – it is our joy and privilege to pray.

Second, what shall we pray?

Well, it is the full extension of King Solomon's prayer.

We pray that God would put the 'amen' on his kingdom.

In the Lord's prayer we pray – "your kingdom come, your will be done".

Particularly, that God's kingdom would be brought into reality here, and now,

As people submit their lives to Jesus, and live with Jesus as their Lord.

Third, where shall we pray?

The answer to this question has been revolutionized by our Lord Jesus Christ.

When he declared that he himself was the temple, that he would be destroyed and in three days rise,

He radically changed the location of prayer forever.

Jesus is our high priest, who has sat down in heaven itself!

We have an awesome, direct connection to God in heaven.

We can pray anywhere, anytime, any hour, any day.

And so fourthly, who else shall pray?

The answer is us. All of us.

The answer is we, the people at the ends of the earth, we the people of the most distant land.

The answer is we, who know the greatness of God, we who know the outstretched arm of God,

We who know God has saved us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So let us do that right now, and turn to God in prayer.